

Manifesto of The Committee of a Thousand

"Congress did not intend to write laws that would improperly inhibit research on new drugs or on new uses of old drugs but it has written laws which, in their effect, do exactly that.... If these regulations are legally correct, it is clear that the law should be changed in some respects to prevent harm to the public welfare."

MAURICE B. VISSCHER
Science, 1967*

The problems: There has been a series of incidents and there has been growing evidence that ethical, essential biomedical research is being retarded; that meritorious efforts of qualified investigators are being frustrated; that "politically generated paralysis"* has in certain instances made some continued scientific studies impossible; that patients and their physicians are being denied essential therapeutic agents; that government agencies have taken partisan positions in valid scientific controversies and that patients may be denied the dignity of choice in respect to their own decisions as to health care risks they may wish to take or refuse.

It has been noted that government agencies too often engage in "the practice of issuing administrative orders without prior offering of opportunity for constructive criticism."* Too often testimony for government committees has been erroneous, and unsubstantiated statements by government officials and others have frequently found their way into the public press to the confusion of the medical profession, biomedical scientists and the general public.

The Committee of a Thousand will address these issues within the context of the premise that the American people have a right to optimal health care and to apolitical and reasoned judgments of scientists and physicians; and that American medical practice and science must retain public accountability coupled with the traditional and essential freedoms within a democratic society.

Toward these objectives: The Committee of a Thousand favors regulation; it opposes regimentation.

It favors intensified research and the prompt availability of new modalities of therapy; it opposes the inhibition or unreasonable constriction of legitimate research through fiscal and legislative constraints.

It favors balanced and adequate biomedical research investments based on health priorities and scientific potentials. It opposes disrupting interventions and cutbacks based on emotional pressures or political expediency.

It favors sound and imaginative investigation, clinical as well as experimental. It opposes the limitation of inquiry by excessive dependence either on any one given type of experimental or clinical modality, investigation or observation, or on excessive conservatism in the evaluation of research proposals.

It favors recognition, evaluation and application of the valid findings of scientists from other countries and opposes the reduplication of research and the limitation of its benefits by automatic regulatory fiat rather than scientific adjudication of data and of relative therapeutic risks and gains.

It favors the protection of an informed public from dangerous drugs but opposes invalid restraints on the availability of new drugs.

It favors uniform and consistent standards for government health and science agencies. It opposes inconsistent and multiple standards for different government agencies, assuming expanded, duplicative and inappropriate missions in assessing science data.

It favors an informed public through balanced reportage in the mass public media of scientific facts and controversies. It opposes any procedures or efforts which distort or falsify the public record as it appears through the mass media.

It favors careful and deliberate public statements by government agencies. It opposes premature and misleading press releases and circumvention by government agencies of the traditional forums of science.

It favors meticulous accuracy and balance in the records of hearings by legislative and regulatory bodies. It opposes misrepresentations, misleading or false data; the perpetuation of inaccuracies in the public record, or partisanship by the government where there is a continuing and valid scientific controversy.

*Fletcher M. B., Science 156:212, April 21, 1967

Committee of a Thousand

for Better Health Regulations
In Formation

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I endorse the Manifesto and herewith join The Committee of a Thousand

Signature _____

Please print name _____

Address _____

Titles and affiliations _____

(Affiliations are for identification only and do not constitute endorsement by the affiliated institution.)

I would like to help. ☐